

The Role of LPG in Disaster Recovery



LPG to the Rescue - Australian Helicopter Delivery

LPG is truly an Exceptional Energy. One of the key benefits of LPG is that it can go virtually anywhere and in the most unexpected and unusual ways.

WLPGA member and Industry Council member Elgas is Australia's largest supplier of LPG and a long standing member of the WLPGA. Elgas goes to great lengths to provide good service to its customers but, in one very dramatic case, they literally and figuratively went above and beyond expectations.

This Exceptional Energy case study covers the unique story.

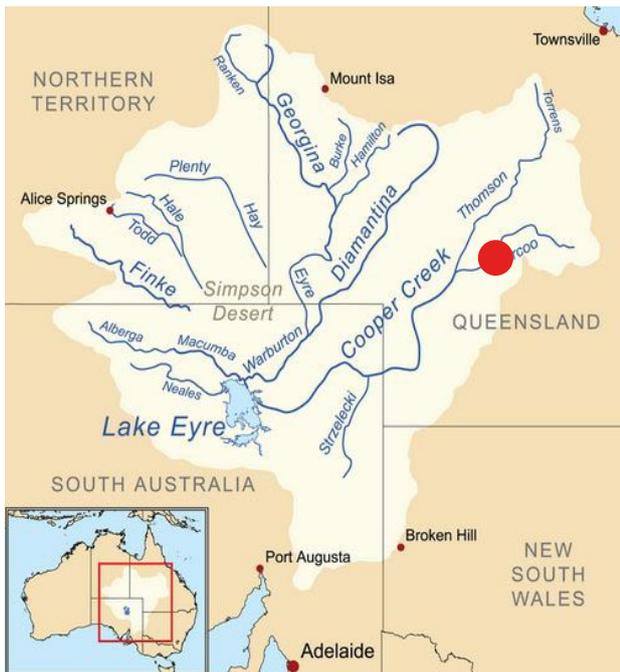
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1. Coopers Creek - A Little Background

Coopers Creek town is by a stream of the same name located in the Northern Rivers region in the state of New South Wales, Australia. Coopers Creek is a famous river in Australia and believed to be named in honour of Alec Cooper, a cedar cutter working in the district surrounding the river during the early 1880. Its also famous as the site of the death of legendary Australian explorers Burke and Wills in 1861 who led an expedition to cross Australia from south to north in what was, at the time, territory completely unknown to European settlers.

Today the remoteness and beauty is what attracts people to the fertile rainforest hills of Upper Coopers Creek.

However there is only one road in and out of the town and it is a region that is prone to severe flooding. The local community is accustomed to being cut off for days at a time when causeways flood after heavy rain. However, in early February 2013, ex-tropical cyclone Oswald caused a landslide that cut off the only road into Coopers Creek for a much longer period. The little town was completely cut off from the rest of the world by a landslide across the only access road. After some two weeks of isolation, the 140 residents of the area were getting desperate for essentials. The NSW State Emergency Service (SES) helicopter was delivering food and medicine but the residents also needed LPG for their homes. What could be done?



2. Elgas - A Personal Touch

Enter Bruce Lyle, the local Elgas Branch Manager. As chance would have it, Bruce was also a founding member of the SES Rescue Team in his home town in the 1980's. Bruce contacted the SES and asked if they would be willing to deliver LPG by helicopter if Elgas worked out the details, including all of the safety issues. The SES agreed.

As safety was the highest priority, Bruce went straight to the Elgas National Safety Manager, Steve Reynolds, who prepared a full Job Safety Analysis. Detailed instructions were prepared. Only after it was all completed was the mission judged as safe to proceed.



Elgas team load the helicopter

3. Helicopters to the Rescue

An SES Huey helicopter was utilised to airlift ten 45kg cylinders into the community. A second Bell Jet Ranger helicopter was used to transport Bruce and Chris Gooley, another member of the Elgas team, as they were needed to supervise the airlift safety procedures and the installation of the cylinders.

At 10:30am, on 18th February, Bruce and Chis took a cylinder truck with stock on-board to Repentance Creek Hall, the helicopter loading site. The site was chosen as it was as close as they could safely get helicopters to the drop zone. However, the flight time was still about 15-20 minutes each way.

Using advice and close consultation with the safety manager, they stacked and strapped the load together, as one bundle, into a cargo net. The load was then flown and the lowered to the ground very gently. The cylinders were stood upright and checked promptly after the landing.

Bruce and Chris flew from the loading point to a paddock and then, after a walk and a four-wheel-ride, they arrived at Coopers Creek School, which had been closed due to the landslide. Here they met with local residents who were grateful to see them, and waiting for their LPG. Chris delivered cylinder handling and connection training to four of the townspeople who would oversee all of the connections. Once trained on the school's cylinders, they were supplied with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), MSDS documentation and all of the appropriate signage, with which they erected an emergency depot.



Arrival of the helicopter



Elgas team load the helicopter



Delivery arriving



Unhooking the delivery

4. Thanks to the Australian NSW State Emergency Service

After the successful delivery, when everything was determined to be safe and secure, the Elgas team returned home. Later, much to their surprise, they found themselves on the Australian 6 o'clock news. The NSW State Emergency Service is volunteers excelling in emergency management.

The SES & pilots were very professional, thorough and extremely safety conscious. Without them, and their know-how, none of this would ever have been possible. They are the true heroes of this exceptional LPG story. Many thanks go to the men and women who volunteer to serve in the NSW SES organisation.



Chris Gooley, ELgas, gives safety training

Why LPG in Emergencies

The powerful combination of the exceptional benefits of LPG make it an essential fuel in emergency situations.

- Easily **transportable**
- An **available** source of energy when off-grid systems collapse
- Can be **stored** anywhere
- Extremely **portable** in smaller cylinder quantities
- Efficient and easy **distribution** when other sources fail
- Offers a **swift life-saving** solution
- **Multiple uses** to fuel temporary kitchens, power generators, heating and cooking

5. Acknowledgements

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For more news from Australia read the Elgas blog at www.elgas.com.au/blog